

Dear Mr. Wells:

Thank you for your remarks before the Mississippi River Commission during our public meeting held on August 17, 2001, in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Commission acknowledges the State of Missouri's concerns regarding operational changes proposed for the Missouri River and the resulting impacts to the Mississippi River. The Corps of Engineers will be meeting with the State of Missouri and other Mississippi River stakeholders during our continued pursuit of a technical solution. A desired solution avoids jeopardy for endangered species while maintaining current standards of flood protection on the Missouri River and supporting navigation on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Your statement and information submitted to the Commission during the public meeting have been forwarded to the Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division for consideration and use. The following paragraphs provide the current status of Corps consideration of modified Missouri River Reservoir operations and opportunities.

On August 31, 2001, the Corps Northwestern Division published its revised draft environmental impact statement (RDEIS) for public and agency review and comment. During the 6-month comment period, extending from August 31, 2001, to February 28, 2002, workshops and hearings will be conducted from Helena, Montana, to New Orleans, Louisiana, to provide information on the RDEIS and solicit input from individuals, tribes, states, other Federal agencies, and interest groups. Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division staff will be

available during workshops at the Mississippi River locations. Each meeting will follow the same format with a public informational workshop from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and a public hearing each evening beginning at 7:00 p.m. Locations along the Mississippi River include:

November 13, 2001	Radisson Hotel and Suites 2000 North Fourth Street St. Louis, Missouri 63102 (314) 621-8200
November 14, 2001	Radisson Hotel 185 Union Avenue Memphis, Tennessee 38103 (901) 528-1800
November 15, 2001	Pontchartrain Hotel 2031 St. Charles Avenue New Orleans, Louisiana 70140 (504) 524-0581

As you may be aware, there will also be a meeting in Jefferson City, Missouri, on November 7, 2001, at the Capital Plaza Hotel, 415 West McCarty Street, with the workshop and public hearing at the same times as noted above.

Following language in the Senate version of the Fiscal Year 2002 Appropriations Bill, the RDEIS presents a range of alternative water control plans with and without a spring rise and low summer flows from Gavins Point Dam. The RDEIS does not identify a preferred alternative, which provides an unbiased forum for public comment. It also allows the Corps and the Administration more time to evaluate public comments and the National Academy of Science report prior to making important decisions regarding Missouri River operations. The National Academy of Science report is to be completed this fall.

Specifically, the RDEIS presents the impacts of six alternative flow management plans on a number of important economic uses and environmental resources in the Missouri River Basin. The RDEIS also examines the impacts of these alternatives on Mississippi River navigation economics and shallow water habitat.

After considering all public comments, the results of a study being conducted by the National Academy of Sciences, and other relevant information, the Corps will prepare a final environmental impact statement and a record of decision. These documents will serve as the basis for revising the master water control manual and for developing an annual operating plan. Currently, implementation of the selected plan is scheduled for March 2003.

The Corps will continue its efforts to meet the flood control, navigation, and environmental needs in the Mississippi Valley. Our success is largely attributable to a strong partnership with local interests and agencies such as the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Thank you again for your participation in our St. Louis hearing. The Commission appreciates receiving your views and looks forward to hearing from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.  
Brigadier General, U. S. Army  
President Designee, Mississippi  
River Commission